

CATHOLIC THEATRE

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5

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A DIRECTOR DRAMATIZES

by

Sister Mary Olive, S.P.
St. Mary-of-the-Woods College
Indiana

Sister Mary Olive contributes what we believe to be very practical and valuable information on that ever-present problem — worthwhile material for our students. Her ideas are not just theory. They have been put through the test of production. The high standard of the St. Mary-of-the-Woods Drama presentations further attests to the value — not only of the plays that have been written by Sister — but of those written under her direction as well.

How often have you read a novel or story and thought it would make a good play? Did you consider dramatizing it yourself? Did the difficulties seem too high to surmount?

The next time the desire to dramatize comes to you, try it. I did and had a most stimulating experience.

I had just finished reading the novel "One Red Rose for Christmas" by Paul Horgan when the thought that it would make a good one-act play for Catholic high schools sprang into my mind. Why not dramatize it? Too much effort, I answered myself, too many scenes, too much time elapsing between scenes. But someone should do it. Very well, let someone do it, I haven't time.

Still, it would be interesting to see whether or not it could be done in space staging. Taking a pencil and an envelope from my pocket, I started to sketch a possible arrangement of areas to represent the most essential scenes. All of these took place in four rooms: Mother Seraphim's office, the Chapel, the parlor, and the kitchen. Four areas would be one too many, but the story demands the use of all four. Perhaps the prie-dieu could be exchanged with the Bishop's chair during the black-out between scenes. This would allow the same area to be used for the Chapel and the parlor.

Holding the pencil sketch of the stage before me, I read straight through the book visualizing each scene being played in its proper area. The major pieces fell into place with comparative ease. The

scene in the florist shop would have to be placed in the orphanage, the time element must be shortened, and some minor difficulties still remained, but I knew this novel could be made into a truly dramatic one-act play.

Yet what a waste of time! I didn't even know whether or not the author would permit such a dramatization. Mr. Horgan, himself, according to the jacket of the book, was the author of two pieces of dramatic literature. Surely, in that case, he would prefer to dramatize it himself. I wrote directly to Mr. Horgan, telling him of my plans and asked to make a dramatization of his story subject to his approval. If he approved it, I wanted the right to give the play here at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in order to test it where all plays should be tested — before an audience.

To my intense surprise and pleasure he sent a most gracious reply. He referred me to his agent who sent a contract in October.

I could hardly wait for the Christmas vacation with the necessary leisure time for writing. The Christmas atmosphere itself, in perfect keeping with the story, helped to spur me on. A spur was needed since there would be little time for writing after the students returned to college. If I were to produce the play at our annual evening of one-act plays in March, as I hoped, it would have to be finished quickly.

The time span of the novel had been condensed from three days to one. But while several of my Sisters whose literary judgment is keen were reading the first draft and offering their criticism, the feeling persisted that even one day was too long for a one-act play. My Sister critics agreed. The scenes were rearranged so that the entire action of the play would take place within a two-hour period after supper on Christmas Day.

This final script was sent to Mr. Horgan. Within ten days the play came back with his approval and many helpful comments. We went into rehearsal at once. The feminine roles were cast from among our freshmen in order to keep as close to the high school level as possible. A high school senior boy was imported to take the part of the Bishop and high school girls were used back stage as members of the orphanage choir and orchestra.

(Continued on page 2)



MR. JOSEPH F. HICE
254 SOUTH WINDSOR BLVD.
LOS ANGELES 4
CALIFORNIA

The "World Premiere" of "One Red Rose" was held at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College on March 6, 1954. The production was a gratifying success. If it seemed a little strange at first to be attending a Christmas play in March, the audience soon entered into the spirit of the play.

During rehearsals several changes were made, of course. Now that it has been done before an audience, there are one or two more changes to be made before the final draft is typed to go to Mr. Horgan. If he approves this final effort, his agent will send the play to the publisher. Then next Christmas there may be another "different" Christmas play on the market for our Catholic high schools.

If that happens, it will certainly have been a most rewarding experience. But even if it does not go that far, the whole experience has been a fascinating one. Meeting a famous author (by correspondence); finding him affable, helpful, and stimulating; watching the novel become the play; seeing the characters rise from the printed page to the active world of the theatre — all this has made every moment worthwhile from the first casual reading through the drudgery of typing and retyping to the final moment when the curtain went down on the "transfiguration of Kathie's world!"

And why is this personal experience recounted on the pages of our Bulletin? The answer is threefold: in the hope that the next time you read a story or a novel and think to yourself "What a good play this would make!" you will take a pencil and paper and see if it will; in the hope that you will not wait for someone else to do it but will obtain the author's permission and do it yourself; and in the final hope that your dramatization will increase the number of good plays for Catholic groups.

We can't all be playwrights, it is true, but we who are directors can recognize the dramatic value of what we read and, since we have in our training the ability to arrange someone else's material into good theatre, we are the logical ones to do it.

What stories have you read recently? Any that you should dramatize?

DEDICATION TABLEAU

At Los Angeles, a Dedication Tableau opened the Fifth Annual Drama Festival. Written by Sister M. Consilia and directed by Brother Roger Celestine, this impressive ceremony inspired both students and directors. Generously, they have offered the script to the Conference. Copies are being made and will be available to members upon request. The ceremony takes only five to ten minutes and is easily produced.

CTC ANNUAL

The annual is rapidly taking shape and Father Herbst states that everything is going according to schedule except for the fact that many nun-directors have failed to send in accounts and pictures of their groups. The fact that this occurs only among nuns leads us to believe that they have failed to receive the news because of Lenten restrictions governing mail. For this reason then, the time will be extended to April 20. Easter over, this will enable them to know of the Annual and to send in their material.

It would be disappointing not to be represented in this project — for you and for us. This is our record of achievement and we should show it proudly and gladly. We are eager to offer a large and a highly representative account of our productions through this project. Please don't delay! Get those pictures and write-ups into the mail and address to Rev. C. Herbst, St. Thomas Seminary, Denver, Colorado.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR READINGS

By Sister Mary Angelita, B.V.M.

At this particular time of the year at Immaculate Conception Academy, Davenport, senior drama students assume a harried look as they search for readings to present in the annual contest sponsored in honor of Helena B. Churchill, former drama teacher of the academy. "Churchills" are fun, as far as the audience is concerned, but for the individuals who must find them, prepare them and present them, the attitude is somewhat different. Here's the difficulty — when a number of girls, from twenty-five to forty, have to seek out satisfactory selections, the available material is exhausted in a very short period of time. After three or four years, readings may be repeated, but the question is, where to look in the meantime?

Sources for readings include Edna Means, Wetmore Declamation Bureau, Ivan Bloom Hardin, Samuel French and Baker.

Cuttings from three-act plays are worthwhile projects, and one-act plays often furnish fine material for interpretation. Then the magazines! The girls avidly read the popular monthly and weekly issues, looking for what might be unusual and appealing. Occasionally — but very occasionally — a truly ambitious member writes her own.

After SORRY, WRONG NUMBER won first place, it was hard to convince the students that the element of suspense or fear was not necessary for a really dramatic reading. Last year's winner, WHY ME, GOD?, a cutting of Sister Mary Yolanda's story in TODAY, and the choice of the previous year, SIXTEEN by Maureen Daly, did much to persuade the budding actresses that horror and fright at physical danger were not the only emotions felt by human beings. Other recent winners are ILLUSION (Edna Means), THE WHOLE TOWN'S ASLEEP (condensed from a short story in McCall's by Ray Bradbury), and PASSING FAIR, a Samuel French monologue.

REGIONAL ROLL CALL

MID-ATLANTIC REPORTING!

Under the chairmanship of Joan Thellusson Nourse, the mid-Atlantic Region held a Drama Festival in New York city on March 27. Marymount College acted as host to colleges of the Region. The program:

THE SURPRISE — Chesterton — College of New Rochelle

THE PARADE AT THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE — Gheon — Fordham University under direction of Rev. Alfred J. Barrett, S.J.

WHITE IRIS — Shannon — Marymount College (Manhattan)

THE UGLY DUCKLING — Milne — Mount St. Vincent College

THE GOLDEN LADY — Freeman — Marymount College (Tarrytown)

PACIFIC-SOUTHWEST REGION REPORTING!

A highly successful Festival was held at Immaculate Heart College (Los Angeles) in late February. Sponsored by the Archdiocesan Dramatics Council, this Fifth Annual Festival featured 13 high schools and 3 colleges. Constructive criticism was offered the high school participants by Mr. Joseph Rice (Immaculate Heart College) and Mr. Ted deLay (Loyola University). Comments on the college productions were given by Mr. and Mrs. Wallace Clark.

Three awards were presented to high schools giving the best all around performance. The program of plays listed below, included two original productions:

THE DOOR — Our Lady of Loretto High School, Sister M. Leonard, director

HIGH WINDOW — St. Monica's High School, Marie Laurie Neville, student director

OUR MISS BROOKS — Notre Dame Academy High School, Sister Mary Louise, S.N.D., director

THE QUEEN'S MEN — (original) Junipero Sierra High School, Mr. Arthur Williams, director

BEWARE OF TERMITES — Our Lady Queen of Angels High School, Sister Rose deLima, director

THE MASTER OF SOLITAIRE — Cathedral High School, Brother R. Celestine, director

THE MASQUE OF TWO STRANGERS — Los Angeles Catholic Girls' High School, Sister M. Consilia, director

IN TRAGIC TIME — Mount Carmel High School, Judson LeHaye, supervisor

A WAKE FOR ME AND THEE — Loyola High School, Mr. Robert Fahrner, S.J., director

HIGH WINDOW — San Gabriel Mission High School, Gladys Page, student director

IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST — Immaculate Heart High School, Mrs. Phyllis Montgomery, director

SUBMERGED — Cantwell High School, Brother C. G. St. John, director

AND UPON OUR CHILDREN (original) — Notre Dame High School, Brother Dunstan, C.S.C., director

College Division

THE HAPPY JOURNEY — Immaculate Heart College, Mr. Joseph F. Rice, director

A SUNNY MORNING — Marymount College, Robin Frizzell, student-director

THE HAND OF SIVA — Loyola University, Rev. Joseph Brusher, S.J., director

EAST CENTRAL REPORTING!

Mercy College (Detroit) sponsored Catholic College Theatre Day on March 20 for members of the CTC of the Detroit area. Opening with Holy Mass at 9 o'clock, the program included some interesting one-act plays and talks.

BE STILL A FRIEND was presented by Mary Manse College (Toledo) under direction of Helen M. Coyle, director.

THE TWELVE POUND LOOK was given by Presentation Players of which Guy Morrell is director.

THE KNAVE OF HEARTS was produced by Marygrove students, Sister Mary Marguerite directing.

GIVE US TIME TO SING by Assumption College Players.

Comments on plays were offered by William Rabe of University of Detroit. A talk on The Stratford Shakespeare Festival was given by Tom Patterson, general manager of the Stratford, Ontario Festival.

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Ten schools and community theatre groups of East Central Region met for the Second Annual Drama Festival at Washington Hall, Notre Dame University on April 3. Among the participants were Catholic Theatre Guild, St. Mary-of-the-Woods College of Terre Haute, and Catholic Theatre Guild of Evansville. John Tumpane of Notre Dame University is in charge of the Festival. Dr. William Elsen is the director of Drama at Notre Dame U.

SOUTHERN REGION REPORTING!

From Sister Mary Immaculate (Wheeling, West Virginia) chairman of the Southern Region comes news of varied activities in that part of the country. Sister's efforts have been unflagging, and the girls of St. Joseph's Academy have assisted admirably, typing and sending hundreds of letters, even assuming the expense of mailing (and Uncle Sam's fees do add up!).

* * *

Regional organization is reaching into each state and this month we are pleased to announce another state chairman, Frances Cary Bowen (John Hopkins University) who will direct the activities of Maryland. Mrs. Bowen's name is too well established to need introduction. We extend every wish for success and know that Marylanders will respond with wholehearted cooperation.

THE WELCOME MAT

- Rev. J. A. Aherne, O.S.A.
3266 Nutmeg Street
San Diego, California
- St. Mary Players
5584 Lindo Paseo
San Diego, California
Mrs. Steve J. Bucik, Business Mgr.
- Sister Mary Annice, O.S.F.
Sacred Heart School
Monticello, Iowa
- Gehlen High Drama Club
LeMars, Iowa
Father A. W. Behrens
- Saint Boniface School
Ionia, Iowa
Sister Mary Ivan, O.S.F.
- Sister Mary Frederick, S.C.N.
Good Shepherd High School
Frankfort, Kentucky
- Rev. Wm. Kane, S.V.D.
St. Francis Xavier Mission Seminary
Island Creek, Massachusetts
- Sister M. Florine, O.P.
St. Gabriel School
Detroit, Michigan
- The Curtain Club
Sacred Heart Seminary
Detroit, Michigan
Rev. Gerard S. Brennan
- Sister Marie Gerard, O.P.
Bethlehem Academy
Faribault, Minnesota
- Crosier Seminary
Onamia, Minnesota
Father Jos. Brennan
- St. John's High School
Delphos, Ohio
- Marylhurst College
Marylhurst, Oregon
Miss Jean Scharfenberg
- Marquette School
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Sr. M. Dolores, O.S.B.
- Holy Angels Academy
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Sister M. Gilbert, B.V.M.
- St. Patrick Speech Club
St. Patrick High School
Kankakee, Illinois
- St. Joseph High School
Manistee, Michigan
Sr. Mary Bonaventa
- Charleston Catholic High School
Charleston, West Virginia
Sister M. Eileen
- Holy Cross Seminary
LaCrosse, Wisconsin
Rev. Albert I. Thomas

"JUST BETWEEN US"

Every girl in our society enjoys CATHOLIC THEATRE tremendously. We enjoy reading all the High School News items, especially those about schools we are familiar with. Thank you for such a splendid publication!

*Genesian Society
Incarnate Word High School
San Antonio, Texas.*

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Are any Play Cycles being planned? I was quite interested in the recent article and would like to know the results — if any — of this suggestion.

L. C. M.

* * *

We are enclosing check for \$11.00 for membership in CTC. We dropped out three years ago because of failure to receive answers to our requests for royalty reductions on two occasions. However, one of our students procured copies of the January and February issues of the Production Calendar. We realized that we had missed the boat. The play lists have been most helpful and the Calendar is really wonderful. We are wondering, however, why there is so little going on in our Region. Many have asked about a Festival or convention but no one seems to be taking hold. We need this type of activity here . . .

(New England Region Member)

Editors Note: We are concerned about our New England area. Perhaps this may bring further interest and offers to promote activity in this region. The Conference succeeds only in proportion to the cooperation of its members.

PLAYWRIGHTS — TAKE NOTE!

Samuel French Publishing Co. announces its Second Annual Collegiate Playwriting contest. Judges will be Alfred de Liagre, Richard Myers, Cecil H. Nickle and George Savage. First award for three-act play is \$500.00 and second is \$150.00. First award for short play is \$100.00, second — \$50.00, and third is \$25.00. Drama departments in which winning students are enrolled will receive plaques. Further details may be secured by writing this office or sending direct to French Publishing Co., 25 W. 45th St., New York, N.Y.

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San Jose Junior Theatre of San Jose Recreation Department announces a playwriting competition, offering \$100.00 as first prize. The play, to be presented by child actors for child audiences (8 to 12) of upper elementary grades, should be approximately one hour and twenty minutes in playing time. Further details may be secured by writing this office or sending directly to F. N. Lickwar, 191 West San Carlos Street, San Jose, California.

HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE

CLASS PLAY OR IT HAPPENS EVERY APRIL

Mary Beecher,
St. Michael Central High School and
Josephinum High School, Chicago

It is half past seven on opening night of the senior class play, and I'm thinking that the parents and friends (this includes all who have been talked into buying tickets or being patrons) would get more for their money if they could see what goes on backstage. As I said, it is seven-thirty, and I'm wondering: (a) where Phil, the leading man is, (b) whether the stage hands (several men who come with the rental of the auditorium) will be around to help me at curtain time. They are absorbed with a television set in the game room, and (c) WHY I majored in Drama.

In the middle of the stage two boys are rehearsing a comedy sequence with an Indian blanket; the boy in the pajamas ties the blanket about his waist, and the other boy chases him, steps on the end of the blanket and trips him. It seemed funny at rehearsals a month ago . . . From another corner of the set, a melancholy youth is thumping out "Heart and Soul" on the grand piano. What just shot by is the prop girl clutching a tray of fudge for Act II, Sc. 1. The fat boy who plays father is pursuing her. Three girls are commemorating themselves in green ink on the back of the set. A fourth has located her uncle's inscription from the class of '32.

A group charges forward for inspection. They represent the first products that the make-up committee has finished. They're finished, all right. Apparently, someone applied brown eye liner with the end of a broom stick.

"Who DID that! You look like PANDAS!"

Time out while the four of them stamp, growl and buffet one another, then congo back to the make-up room, paw on shoulder.

That sharp ringing and buzzing in the ears is startling, but is only Kenny, the assistant stage manager with the 'phone and door-bell unit which he rigged up in Physics lab.

There's a lull until the feminine lead announces tearfully that Phil has arrived, but has laryngitis. After stopping the mascara flood of tears, you approach the piano and send the tragic thumper out for lemons. He doesn't move until you advance the money. Notice that lone boy, who is gesturing and muttering to himself in the corner? He is lashing himself into the mood for his scene. 'Seems he took

the drama reading list to heart and read a Russian authority on "Concentration." He's quite good, too; everyone pays attention when he delivers the groceries in ACT II.

At five minutes before eight someone from make-up issues a bulletin that the bald-headed wig for Father cannot be found, and that Bert, Mimi and Stash aren't feeling at all well — in fact, they feel downright sick. This calls for quick action; you offer peppermints and prescribe deep breathing exercises at an open door. A wardrobe girl prys open your hand and inserts a telegram which reads . . .

"Best wishes to Thursday cast for fine performance. Friday Cast." Three girls want to know if they look all right, the stage manager reports all props in order, and the Band Master approaches you baton-on-wrist watch, for synchronization and a last minute recap. You will start at eight-fifteen sharp! (You don't know how sharp, he doesn't know how flat, but it will be eight-fifteen.)

Somehow the play does begin promptly. It takes some doing, but you maneuver the stage hands to their respective posts, Father finds his bald-headed wig in his bay window, (that is, he forgot he hid it for safe-keeping between the small pillow and the pillow slip which comprise his bay window) and you scare the voice right back into the leading man. After that, you give a pep talk to all those bright-eyed youngsters who are at last ready to "show 'em," and the curtain rises on another class play.

If you interpret your character to the very limit of your ability today, you will portray that character just a little better than that tomorrow. If you play the part for all you are worth at every rehearsal, and study the character between rehearsals, in your final interpretation you will achieve a depth and breadth that you never dreamed possible.

* * *

When you begin the study of a character, ask yourself three questions: How old a person is this character? What is his social status? What is his general disposition? When you can answer those three questions accurately, and when your portrayal follows those answers, you cannot go too far astray in your portrayal.

* * *

If you have never learned to be anything but yourself on the stage — however charming that self may be — you have missed one of the greatest pleasures in acting — that of being many different people.

CROSS - COUNTRY CIRCUIT

HIGH SCHOOL THEATRE

MARCIAN PLAYERS

Sophomore Marcians of St. Francis Academy, Joliet, Illinois, presented MORE PERFECT UNION and PINOCCHIO under direction of senior Drama students during late Fall. At Christmas, the Juniors presented AT THE FEET OF THE MADONNA.

In early Spring Seniors again directed Sophomores in WILL O' THE WISP, THE PLUM TREE, and MY COUSIN FROM SWEDEN. Climax of activities will be SONG AT THE SCAFFOLD by Emmet Lavery on April 30, May 1, 2, 3 and 4.

* * *

Bishop McDonell Memorial High School
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

THE MISER is scheduled for presentation by the Drama department on April 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25. Sister M. Susan, S.S.N.D. is director.

Mount Marty High School
Yankton, South Dakota

THE IVORY DOOR, directed by Sister Marie, was presented in early February.

St. Walburga's Academy
New York, N. Y.

SONG OF BERNADETTE has been chosen as major production of the year. It will be presented May 5, 6 and 7. Mother Mary Natalie, S.H.C.J. is director.

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OUR LADY OF VICTORY, FT. WORTH, TEXAS

Our Lady of Victory sponsored Players, Inc. in the Walter Kerr adaptation of THE MISER, during the month of December at the beautiful Will Rogers Municipal Auditorium in Ft. Worth. On the afternoon of the Players' arrival, the students and faculty had the privilege of seeing the Players in a scene from OTHELLO on the academy stage. Afterwards, members of the Mothers' Club, assisted by Genesians, gave a dinner at the school for the touring actors and actresses.

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PREMIERE OF FATHER LORD'S "JOY TO THE WORLD"

Holy Angel's Academy, Minneapolis, Minnesota, is at work on what promises to be an exciting dramatic undertaking. Sister Charitas, the director, sends the following report: "When I asked Father Lord if he would consider writing a Marian Year play, I never dreamed he would produce such a stupendous offering as I received two weeks ago. The entire play is very beautiful and I am glad to have a vehicle worthy of presenting to Mary in her lovely month of May. The various departments will help. Sister Cosmas and the art classes are designing, coloring and pasting all costume plates. The Glee Club (50) will take over the singing, and some very fine student dancers will, supervised by their dance teachers, direct the many group dances."

NEWS FROM THE TEXAN REGION

The twenty-eight Genesian Players of Incarnate Word High School, Mt. Erin, San Antonio, Texas, meet every Monday and have divided into four groups with the following schedule of programs:

The first Monday of the month is Play-Reading Day. Having learned the essentials of a staged reading, each group is to present a cut play. The second Monday is Technique Day. A lecture-demonstration is provided emphasizing some phase of acting, make-up, designing, speech, etc. The third Monday is Talent Day — each group presents representatives in monologue, piano, singing, dancing, pantomime, etc. The essentials of emceeing are stressed in order to insure an interesting and novel performance. The fourth Monday is Marian Day — each group presents in radio, TV, quiz, speech, or any form — some phase of Mary. They are now working on how Mary looked and what she said in four of the main apparitions of late years.

On the main feasts of Our Lady, beginning February 11, they will present over the P.A. system, a short radio playlet about the Feast.

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FRESHMEN MARIANETTES

Freshmen CTC members of St. Joseph Academy, Wheeling, W.Va., have called themselves the Marianettes. They, along with upper classmen whose drama club is Genesiennes, will attend a play festival at Morgantown, W.Va. Sr. M. Immaculate is director.

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MARY HONORED

In the spirit of the Marian Year, THE SONG OF BERNADETTE holds the spotlight as the major production for many schools. Aquinas High School, LaCrosse, Wisconsin produced it on February 21. In March, Sister M. Consuelo directed a production at St. Mary High School, Sleepy Eye, Minnesota and Sister M. Baylon at St. Augustine High School, Austin, Minnesota. May 5 and 6, St. Walburga's Academy in New York City will see Sister Mary Natalie's production of this fine play. St. Joseph's Academy, Wheeling, West Virginia, announces a spring performance of another popular Marian Year play — SEVEN MIRRORS. Sister Mary Immaculate is the director.

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APPLAUSE FOR . . .

MURDER IN A NUNNERY — February 7 and 8 — St. Boniface High School, Cold Spring, Minnesota. Sister M. Michaela, O.S.B., director of the cast of 43.

DOWN TO EARTH by Betty Knapp — Nov. 29 and 30 — Glennon High School, Kansas City, Missouri. Sister Mary Noelle, director.

THE CURIOUS SAVAGE at St. Francis Academy, Joliet, Ill. Sister M. Mercia, O.S.F., director.

Immaculate Conception Academy, Dubuque, Iowa, for their presentation of THE SPIDER, a one-act mystery comedy at the Dyersville, Iowa play festival.

CROSS-COUNTRY CIRCUIT

COMMUNITY THEATRE

• THE PARKSIDE PLAYERS GUILD will stage **OUTWARD BOUND** at the DePaul Settlement House (Chicago) on April 23, 24 and 25. A special invitation is extended to nuns for the matinee on April 25. The cast is responding to the mood set for this fantasy-drama by their director, Ellen Oliva. The Players Guild is a part of the DePaul Settlement House, conducted by the Daughters of Charity.

• Catholic Theatre of Mobile is planning an original called **ZOE**. It will feature the life of Catherine Laboure, emphasizing her Vision of the Blessed Mother. Father Anthony Zoghby is the director.

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• Blackfriars Guild (Dayton) are embarking on the final play of the year, **I LIKE IT HERE**, a lively comedy with an elaborate setting. Presentation is planned for early May.

COLLEGE and UNIVERSITY THEATRE

• Marylhurst College of Oregon, being welcomed as a new member this month, reports an interesting and active program. An arena theatre has been successfully featured in the department with such productions as **THE CURIOUS SAVAGE**, **PEG O'MY HEART** and an adaptation of James Thurber's **THIRTEEN CLOCKS**. The latter was written by a Senior student. Jean Scharfenberg is the enthusiastic director of this group.

• The College Genesians of Mount Mary College (Yankton, South Dakota) produced an original play called **MARY AND THE SWORD** as their offering for the Marian Year. Written to fit the Lenten season, the play probes the mystery of suffering in the life of the Mother of our Redeemer, and correlates this suffering with modern life. It was presented April 1 and 2.

• The Genesians also did an original dance-play adapted from **ALICE IN WONDERLAND**. Called **THE LOBSTER'S QUADRILLE** it was given over TV. Sister Jeanette, director "rolled off" three TV scripts recently — no unusual feat, apparently, for this ambitious director.

• **OUR LADY OF FATIMA** was presented on April 4 by Marymount College (Tarrytown-on-the-Hudson). This was a Marian Year offering and a benefit for the Carmelite missions. Anthony Messuri was director.

• **SMILIN' THRU** will be presented on May 4 under the direction of Louis Tanno. Mr. Tanno also directed two one-act plays presented at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Play Festival on March 27.

• Under the direction of Dominic J. Keller, O.S.B. St. John's University (Collegeville, Minnesota) presented **MACBETH** on April 3, 4 and 5. Preceding this, the Players had presented **THE TEMPEST** in December and **THE LADY'S NOT FOR BURNING** in November.

• Students of Clarke College (Dubuque) played the women's roles in a recent production of **HIS EMINENCE OF ENGLAND** in late March. They are now working on Arthur Miller's **THE CRUCIBLE** which will be presented at Clarke this coming month.

• The Masquettes of Sacred Heart College, (Wichita, Kansas) presented **I REMEMBER MAMA** in late February, under the direction of Elvira Scheetz Bujarski.

• On Sunday, April 25, Mount St. Scholastica Drama Department (Atchison, Kansas) will play host to college drama students of the area, and will hold a series of college-level workshops with stress on student-directors problems. That evening there will be a presentation of **AS YOU LIKE IT** by the "Mounties."

• Along with the premiere of **ONE RED ROSE**, dramatized by Sister Mary Olive, O.P. director of Drama at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College (Terre Haute, Indiana) The Players Club produced Gheon's **PARADE AT THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE** on March 6.

• St. Xavier College (Chicago) are rehearsing **THE WOMEN HAVE THEIR WAY** by the Alvarez Quintero brothers.

• Mount St. Mary's College (Los Angeles) presented **TWELFTH NIGHT** in mid-January. In March, under the direction of Frank Hanley, they produced **BARTER**. In reminiscent mood, Mr. Hanley recalls that he had worked on the first production of **BARTER** eighteen years ago when Father Urban Nagle, the author, first produced it in Providence, Rhode Island, which city, incidentally, claims both as "home town boys."

• **SONG OF BERNADETTE** is scheduled for presentation on April 26 by the Drama department of St. Mary-of-the-Wasatch (Salt Lake City). Sister M. Philip is the director.

CHILDREN'S THEATRE

• Four performances of **THE BOYHOOD OF DAVID COPPERFIELD** will be given at the Johns Hopkins Playshop (Baltimore) under the direction of Frances Cary Bowen. The script is a dramatization prepared by a graduate student. Two casts, comprised of 40 teen-agers, are being used for the production.

MORE RECORDINGS!

To the excellent list of recordings suggested by Sister M. Angelita, B.V.M., Sister Agnese, S.P. suggests the addition of

AN EVENING WITH SHAKESPEARE (Theatre Masterworks)

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL (Angel Recording) and

READINGS BY SANDBURG, HUSTON, WELLS, MOOREHEAD (Decca).

NEW APPOINTMENT

We are happy to announce that the Pacific Region has, for its new Chairman, Mr. Frank Hanley, head of the department of Drama and Speech at Mount St. Mary's College (Los Angeles). Mr. Hanley, formerly of Notre Dame University, and also remembered for his role in *THE MAGNIFICENT YANKEE* brings ability, enthusiasm, and experience to this important task. Pacific Region has never been wanting in cooperation and response from its large membership. We feel confident that, under such capable leadership, it will advance even more the standards of the Catholic Theatre.

ONE-ACTS "ON TOUR"

An Evening of One-Act Plays was presented at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College on March 6, 1954. The first play on the program was "Parade at the Devil's Bridge" by Henri Gheon, published by Longmans, Green, and Company. Although this play is intended for four men and one woman, the four male parts can be made female without violating the spirit of the play and without changing much more of the dialogue than the pronouns. The hermit becomes an anchoress. The devil is alluring in red satin. The fisherman can easily be a fisherwoman dressed as her daughter in Breton peasant costume. The cat is even more feline with a feminine voice.

The production started as a project in acting class but its success on March 6 has resulted in the students taking it "on tour." It will be given at the Women's Department Club and Schulte High School in Terre Haute on two successive Wednesday afternoons. It will represent Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College at the Indiana Catholic College and Little Theatre One-Act Play Festival to be held at Notre Dame University on April 3. Two groups of the alumnae are importing it for entertainment at large meetings. The Chicago Alumnae will present it at Marywood High School, Evanston, March 28 and the Cincinnati group want it on April 10.

The second play of the evening was "One Red Rose" a dramatization in one-act of the novel "One Red Rose for Christmas" by Paul Horgan which is discussed at length in another place in this issue of the Bulletin.

FESTIVAL SPEAKER

Sister Mary Immaculate, S.S.J., chairman of the Southern Region, addressed the participants and directors of the Wheeling Diocesan Drama Festival on March 13. Her subject was Catholic Theatre. The Festival was held at St. Francis High School at Morgantown, West Virginia. Eight schools participated.

The program of plays included *SEEDS OF SUSPICION*, *DISPLACED BABY SITTER*, *A SAINT'S REPOSE*, *IDOLS*, *HIGH WINDOW*, *RIDERS TO THE SEA*, *THE BOND BETWEEN*, and *GREY BREAD*.

CATHOLIC THEATRE LEADER SERIOUSLY ILL

Word has just reached this office that Reverend D. A. Lord, S.J., Director's of *THE QUEEN'S WORK*, is seriously ill. The CTC owes much to Father Lord. In its founding days, he gave generously of his experience, time and effort. His unflagging confidence in our efforts, his constant help and interest in Conference matters, and his general devotion to the cause have always been a source of inspiration and encouragement.

We know that the many prayers of our members who have, each one, profited by his wonderful crusading spirit in CTC, will storm Heaven in his behalf.

SCRIPT OUT OF PRINT

MOON OVER MULBERRY STREET, long a favorite play for little theatre, is no longer published. However, *PARKSIDE PLAYERS* (CHICAGO) have had copies printed that are available at \$1.00 each. Write to Sister M. Josephine, 2145 North Halsted Street, Chicago.

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Quietly, but efficiently, our membership committee, under the chairmanship of Ted deLay (Loyola University, Los Angeles) has been working to acquaint high schools, little theatres, colleges and universities with the work of the Conference. The effort expended has been great — anyone who has ever worked on such a project knows the detail and time involved. The results have been gratifying as *THE WELCOME MAT* shows.

The Conference stands indebted to Mr. deLay for his generous and unstinting service and for the fine organization of effort on this project. Despite an already crowded schedule, he has included this heavy task, efficiently organized the work and given attention to every detail.

If you know of a director, school or group whom you feel would or should be affiliated with the Conference, please send such information on to Mr. deLay. What we sometimes forget is that the building up of the membership benefits all of us. This is a purely selfish motive — but a real one, nonetheless.

MEMO

Have you placed your order for the Annual? It will be impossible to order extras at a later date. Send in your request with the number desired at once so you will not run the danger of finding that the supply is exhausted.

And don't forget that many of your students will wish to have copies. Give them a chance to order too.

THE MODERN THEATRE

A FORM OF THE MARIAN APOSTOLATE

By The Rev. Jozef Boon, C.SS.R.

Translated by Hugh Dickinson

(At the International Marian Congress, held at Rome 23-31 October 1951, on the eve of the declaration of the dogma of the Assumption of the Most Holy Virgin, Father Boon was invited to give a report on the modern theatre, as a form of the Marian apostolate, to the assembled Fathers of the Redemptorist Order. By kind permission of Father Boon, a prolific playwright and himself one of the outstanding figures in the movement he describes, his report is here presented as a special supplement of the Catholic Theatre Conference Bulletin.)

In these days of Marian studies, I feel I should do more than describe for you the storm of popular enthusiasm that has swept Flanders, that has been called --in a very special sense-- a Mystique, and that stirs up and transports the spirit of great communities of audiences. It is not my place to propagandize for the modern religious theatre. It has, of late, conquered all classes of society and its triumphant advance continues in all countries. But I feel it my duty to justify the existence of this theatrical movement, not as if to defend it before its judges, but rather to show on what solid foundations it rests: it will be easier, then, to grasp what possibilities this modern religious theatre can offer in the service of the Marian idea.

I shall first set forth what could be called the philosophy of dramatic art, religious in subject matter and Marian in emphasis. Secondly, we shall see how the Marian drama took shape during the Middle Ages. And finally, I shall tell you what has occurred in Flanders in these last few years and how the multitudes have been won over.

I. IDEAS, PRINCIPLES, and ORIGIN OF THE RELIGIOUS AND MARIAN DRAMA

Dante wrote that art is the grandson of God, meaning by this that art reflects the splendor that shines on Christ His Son. Art can have no other end but God. Is it not, indeed, the most beautiful thing in man? Hence art can have no other end than man himself has.

Art is the purest expression of human genius. It is the outward sign of all that we experience in our inmost hearts, in our most intimate emotions and in our vaulting inspiration which prompts us to say: "Our Father Who art in heaven." Art is man's high dream, born of his homesickness for God.

God is the origin and end, the first word and the final syllable, the alpha and the omega, of every art; just as nature and man himself have God as their end and speak, each in his own way, the language of God. Before the birth of Christ, at the height of paganism, art at its best already knew this nostalgia, this longing for God. Art, and its human creator, the artist, long to be restored to God, their supreme, eternal Creator; they wish to raise over earth the canticle of eternal beauty which inspires their whole being.

If we assert that the theatre, and especially the modern theatre, with its spectacular conception of great community audiences that flock to it by the dozens and even hundreds of thousands--if we wish to affirm, I say, that this theatre is a form of the Marian apostolate, then we shall have to show that dramatic art, when it lends itself to this apostolate, must remain--to the roots of its being--faithful to its own definition: in other words, dramatic art must remain art and drama, else it will be forced to speak a language other than that of art; yet it can serve this noble ideal without diminishing its intrinsic artistic value. Art is of God, and with all its being it must glorify God, it must please God and sing His canticle, dulcia cantica dramatis, in the midst of this earthly life; and, by its created beauty, must glorify Him Who is infinite beauty.

If we examine the evolution of dramatic art amongst ancient peoples, we can establish undeniably that it developed from religious rites. Theatre is the form of art which sprang from the actions of man adoring God. It is the action of man venerating God and rendering Him thanks: this action develops from narrative, from choral songs, from man's worshipful gestures; little by little, the struggle, the dualism in his soul and his life, manifests itself; there is evil, there is the enemy who wakens in him his anguish; the human battle is joined; his life, torn between evil and God, stiffens in the face of the enemy who unmasks before him; evil becomes personified, becomes incarnated, in a character who opposes him.

As long as the rite retained its purity of form as a religious act, man expressed in simple narrative and lyric choruses his aspirations, his nostalgia, his gratitude and his veneration of God; he expressed his fear, his anxieties when facing a power other than God: this evil that he knew to exist, whether as a dark and mysterious force that lay in wait for him, or whether as an incarnation in another human being who opposed him. At first, the rite preserves its unilateral form: man himself expresses before God his sentiments and his fear of the enemy; but the enemy does not take part in this ritual action, and so the rite remains unilateral.

But once the rite evolves and becomes drama, the idea of the enemy takes shape in an actor who opposes the principal actor: drama is created, it expresses the conflict between good and evil; we witness the struggle of man as he seeks to achieve his end in the harsh struggle of life on earth. Drama becomes bilateral, in contrast to the unilateral rite. Tragedy is born of this action, this conflict, which ensues between the hero and his antagonist. Dramatic art remains faithful to its essence, it is the most evolved art, the most complete, and interprets more than any other art, the homesickness for God, the ascent of man towards his destination. It is actually living man himself, the actor, who is the artistic form of drama and who expresses all the action.

Moreover, amongst all peoples, is not dramatic art the glorious apparition which demonstrates that a people has arrived at the apogee of its perpetual development? Dramatic art is the art of human action, which translates for us the vital problem of God and man, and in which man battles to arrive at union with God.

Let us add that the drama, which cannot exist without the actor, also cannot exist without an audience; and that a play depends upon the reactions of the audience which, in turn, influence the actor. The spectator participates in the drama, for the drama unfolds quite as much in him as in the actor on the stage. If we keep in mind this specific character of dramatic art--the spectator's active share in the drama, we can readily conceive the present formula for the modern religious drama, where the crowd, as actor, participates in the action almost as much as it does as spectator.

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In developing these principles, we believe we have shown the foundations, both wide and deep, on which we shall soon be able to erect the Marian drama, the canticum dramaticum, that the divine office invites us to sing before the throne of the Blessed Virgin.

The Marian drama begins at Nazareth. Mary, the young maid, saluted by the Angel of God, said her Fiat and God came to earth, visibly; for nine months later she smiled for the first time on her son, God Who became man, and, thereby, her own child. She, the Mother of God, carried God in her arms and smiled at God become visible on earth. "Abba, Father," she murmured! "My Son," she wept for joy! And at that very moment a total revolution occurred in art, and above all in dramatic art. God is no longer only in heaven, He is in our midst on earth. Emmanuel... that while we acknowledge Him to be God, seen by men, we may be drawn by Him to the love of things unseen. And since then, the ascent towards God cannot be made except through Christ. Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum Filium Tuum.

Henceforth, tragedy takes place on earth, between Christ and man; the nostalgia for God, right up to its sublime mystical forms, will become infinite love which moves the soul and leads it into the still waters of grace. Omnia ad me traham, I shall draw all things unto Me, says Christ. But the eternal adversary stood before Christ: "Art Thou the Christ?" asked the tempter--for Lucifer wishes to push back the boundaries in like manner; the struggle will be fought on earth between the devil and Christ, God on earth. The tragedy of Calvary has begun. Already, on that first Christmas night, at the very moment of her unspeakable joy, or right after, Mary looked into the eyes of her Christ and there foresaw Calvary, the terrible tragedy of the cross. The Blessed Virgin's life will be sealed by that of Jesus, Who is God on earth; she bears the imprint of this divine-human drama. The drama of God and the soul takes place in the soul of Christ, throughout his life: "...My sorrow always before My eyes"; it takes place, too, in the heart of Mary who knows that her love will serve only to rear her child and to prepare Him for His passion, and, as it were, render it as profound as possible. Henceforth, neither history, nor theology, nor art will be to represent the figure of Christ, or His drama, without Mary. Art, asserts the German philosopher Hegel, can no longer conceive of itself without Christ, and we might add: nor Christ without

His Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary.

At that point, Christian drama was born. It has only to be developed. Christ will be its foundation and will lay its cornerstone. When He institutes the Holy Eucharist, the sacrament of man's union with God, he establishes a rite. He takes bread, raises His eyes to heaven, gives thanks to God, blesses the bread, breaks and distributes the elements of the bread among his apostles, and pronounces the words which transform it... The Word is made Flesh, it is no longer merely a sign, as in the language of men; the Word made flesh produces reality, just as did the Fiat of Creation. The act is eternal reality, word and deed are one, and they achieve the sacrifice of God, as it took place on Calvary, in the presence of Mary and with her full collaboration. This act of Christ's at the Last Supper, having the same sacrifice of Calvary behind it like a double image, is the commencement of the liturgical rite. And from it, in turn, will be born Christian drama. There is no need to tell how the liturgy was derived from the rite, how its content--offeratory, consecration and communion--was expressed in the growing liturgy. You know how the liturgy availed itself of choirs, in the manner of Greek drama, to enlighten the faithful in regard to the mysteries of the act, and you know, too, how in the Middle Ages the Christian drama was derived from the liturgy by the same process that produced the ancient drama. Once born, the modern Christian drama persisted through the Renaissance, and has revived, especially in our own day, in a popular form that draws the people into the action, engrosses the whole Christian community, and becomes eminently Marian; so that during these last five years, the most beautiful productions have been plays about the Virgin.

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We have felt that it would be helpful and even necessary first to lay the foundation, to show how the philosophy of Christian art accounts for the vitality of the religious theatre and, specifically, the Marian theatre. It is extremely important to be able to justify the notion of the Christian and Marian theatre, quite as much in respect to the philosophy of art, as in respect to history and dogma. There must be nothing facetious in this conception; the theatre is not a substitute for art, to be used for extrinsic ends as a minor devotion! It is art, it is religious art, as the soul itself is religious.

II. THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS AND MARIAN DRAMA IN FLEMISH AND DUTCH LITERATURE

Since the beginning of Christianity, the history of theatrical development demonstrates, quite as much among oriental peoples as in our western countries, that the Christian theatre expands at the same rate as the Christian idea. A new world is being established, one which avails itself at times of certain elements recovered from the ancient world, but the idea centers about Christ, and the Blessed Virgin is always there. The history of the Christian theatre is the history of the Church. Space is lacking in which to consider the separate theatrical elements that arose from the liturgy; it would require a detailed study of every country, and others have already done it.

By means of certain ancient texts, obsolete rituals, bas-reliefs in cathedrals, and motifs in stained-glass windows, they have succeeded in reconstructing that slow, but sure, evolution. We see how the scene of the Annunciation, first to be emphasized, became theatre: the Angel and the Virgin are included among the mansiones or little houses in the church choir and the scene between them takes place, much as if a stone bas-relief were to come to life. Although still firmly embedded in the liturgy, the scene is already dramatic action. These liturgical tableaux were still in vogue up to the French Revolution, notably in the Church of Our Lady at Courtrai, in Belgium. But, from the XIIth to the XIIIth Centuries, we lack the central links of that development which connect those preliminary sketches to the fully elaborated plays of the later period.

The documents of these centuries, moreover, are very scarce, in regard to the Lowlands. But comparisons with other countries, and of early plays with those of the following centuries, permit no doubt about the Marian development itself. Bas-reliefs and certain texts from other countries give proof of the existence of examples--for instance, such a play as Theophilus, which is essentially the ancient legend of Faust, but which interposes the Virgin as mediatrix between God and Satan.

A very ancient Flemish play, Masscheroen, interpolated into the text of a Marian play of the XVth Century, shows clearly that earlier epochs utilized the theme of Mary's interposing her mercy in the face of the devil's demands. We are, however, well into the XVth Century before we discover the first religious texts entirely composed of a very remarkable dramatic and psychological composition that offers sufficient proof that an elaboration must have preceded it.

The most ancient Marian play is Marloke van Nimegon (Little Marie of Nimegue), the well-known legend which St. Alphonsus reproduced in The Glories of Mary. For seven years the young girl lives with the devil at Anvers: she is the cause, through her wicked life, of many sins and murders. Remorse drives her to return to Nimegue, despite the devil's opposition. Unable to prevent her, the devil decides to accompany her. When they reach Nimegue, the country fair is in full swing. A traveling theatrical troupe enacts the play, Masscheroen, wherein the devil complains before God that He rescues from damnation souls that belong to the devil by right. It is always Mary who interposes and whose mercy triumphs. Witnessing this scene where the Virgin pleads for souls, Marie is overwhelmed, and it is at this moment that she says the famous line: "This is better than a sermon!" Not that we intend, in quoting this line, to substitute theatre for preaching, for to preaching alone belongs the official mission of spreading the divine word; what we do intend is to suggest that the theatre may reach souls in places where a sermon no longer can, and that it has the power to give imaginative life to the privileges and the grandeur of the Blessed Virgin.

Little Marie is converted and does penance. This text, while being a form of the apostolate, is above all theatre in the true sense of the word and achieves its apostolic aim precisely because it is so solidly art and drama. Consequently, it has enjoyed hundreds of performances, down to our own day, and has been added to the repertoires of dramatic companies of the highest repute.

Equally remarkable are two other manuscripts: The First Joy and The Seventh Joy of Mary; that is, the Annunciation and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin. We know from some explicit documents that seven such plays existed, each dramatizing one of the joys of the Blessed Virgin. And each year, in a seven-year cycle, one of them would be staged in the Grand'Place of Brussels, after the procession of Our Lady from the church of Sablon. This was in the XVth Century. We know, too, that it was a priest who composed the texts, and this fact explains the depth and accuracy of the doctrine they dramatized, so that the play dealing with the Assumption adequately illustrates the tradition on which the proclamation of the dogma was to be based. It would be really interesting to translate certain passages of it for you, to show with what sweetness--a sweetness that recalls St. Bernard, the author speaks to us of the Virgin, or has St. John or the choryphee speak of her.

I cannot forget a very charming Marian play of the XVth Century, by Cornelis Everaert de Bruges, entitled Maria Hoedeken, but commonly known simply as The Rosary. Here is the plot: A young man, eager to serve the Blessed Virgin, was wont to gather flowers each day and make a garland of them to lay at the feet of the Virgin's statue. When he entered a monastery, a great temptation assailed him, for he could no longer render the Blessed Mother this act of piety. But his superior counseled him to recite the Rosary. Whereupon, as he recites each Ave, he sees a flower bloom in the snow of the monastery garden. So he understands the salutary effect of the Rosary, and the joy he thereby affords the Blessed Virgin.

Flandria marialis has truly consecrated its theatre to the Blessed Mother.

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Shakespeare calls the theatre the chronicle of the times. The ideas which dominate a people seize upon the theatre, too. And the theatre then reflects back upon the people these same ideas crystallized in artistic form. If the Marian idea truly belongs, so to speak, among the fundamental truths which constitute the Christian drama, we have every right to rejoice that the theatre is attempting, more than ever, to portray Mary for us.

I need not demonstrate further the very great influence of the theatre: His Holiness has just done so, in a most magistral fashion, in his allocution to the representatives of the Catholic Theatre Union. Everyone will concede that every new idea that has been launched in the course of history, has made use of the theatre. The reason is easy to find. The theatre is the most human of the arts, for in it men themselves, actors and spectators alike, achieve the drama by a mutual action which they perform, the ones upon the others. Therein lies the specific character of the theatre: drama is not achieved until it is played by actors, and it is not truly played until it is given before spectators who react and take part in the action.

III. THE MODERN MARIAN THEATRE IN FLANDERS.

It remains for me to report to you what the modern theatre has accomplished

from the Marian point of view. I could have made this survey for you by considering the many countries where the revival of the religious theatre has occurred during this first half of the century. Such a bird's-eye view would not, of course, be devoid of interest. I think it would prove to us this: little by little, the artists are becoming aware of their mission, as the Middle Ages understood it: the actor is notably the "artifex," the artisan of the people to whom he belongs; and he must express their ideas and beliefs: his role is to serve.

We see now why the Marian play assumes a more and more preponderant place in the repertoires of our new theatrical organizations. And we are convinced that the plays of the Virgin will gain now luster if this point is insisted upon: the artist must serve the people and the people's aspirations. Without a doubt, just as the medieval artisan worked on the cathedrals, the modern artist must live, and be in intellectual communion, with the religious ideas of the people; and priests must guide the artists, just as in the Middle Ages, in order to furnish them with the theological basis of the subject they are to elaborate. In this respect, the value of their artistic work, though done "to order," will not be lessened.

Forgive me for confining myself largely to Flanders.

It was in 1910 that there occurred the first signs of a revival of the theatre. And a Marian play marked its rebirth. Canon Michiels, master of theology and dean of Hal, in the small city of Brabant at the gates of Brussel, decided to stage a play of the Blessed Virgin, in order to dramatize the pilgrimage to the miraculous statue of the Blessed Virgin and to keep Mary alive in the hearts of the pilgrims. Every fifth year, for forty years, performances have been given on several consecutive Sundays and last more than four hours. The play is the life of Mary, written in accordance with dogmatic texts and the living tradition. The simplicity of the play and its music generated intense emotion. L'Abbé Michiels and the priest-author Walgrave created the play, watched over its growth, and breathed into it their theological ideas. They strove with special care to dramatize the Assumption of Mary and her Coronation in Heaven. Need I add that it is precisely these two tableaux which, for forty years, have excited the deepest emotion in the crowd?

All that has been said and written about this play, whether by learned men or the simplest of spectators, would make up an anthology that would provide powerful proof of the highly religious character and the great influence of the Marian theatre. Since its creation, more than 250,000 spectators have come to see the play. All the principles which must be basic to the religious theatre are therein fully respected; that is to say, the play is art, the dogma is represented in its most intrinsic form, without alteration or violation of historical truth, and without fanciful exaggeration. The characters, especially Mary, move within the limits of the evangelistic accounts and make no gesture, say no word, not in keeping with their nature or their mission.

These performances were held indoors. Little by little, the theatre in Flanders has achieved closer contact with the masses; it left the theatres to take

place in the open air, in public squares and outdoor arenas. The places of pilgrimage created their own Marian plays. Tongres, the most ancient Marian town, had its play, The Seven Joys. Other cities or shrines prefer to stage The Seven Sorrows. The dominant idea of the latter play is this: Mary, knowing full well that in rearing Jesus, she but brings Him closer, step by step, to an ignominious death on the cross, continues, nevertheless, to lavish on Him her maternal love, while already, in anticipation, she is living through the Passion in which she will be so intimately involved later on. It was the contention of the ascetic author, Father Joseph Schrijvers, that prose was inadequate to convey this idea in its fullness, that only the theatre could succeed in doing it! And, truly, we lived through moving scenes, we saw the Queen of Sorrows come down to the forestage and speak to mothers and to thousands of spectators, and ask them: "Have you known sorrow like unto my sorrow?" And we interpreted in our own way the impressive silence, the barely suppressed emotion, the stifled sobs. Those were unforgettable summer nights!

Zutendaal, Neigem, and so many other holy places, unknown to you all but dear to the heart of Mary, had each its Marian play, which contributed not a little in attracting pilgrims in great numbers. By turns, the legend, the history, the mission of Mary were evoked on the stage. For example, I see again the Virgin of Zutendaal--one of the most ancient shrines of Mary--exhibiting her book in which are inscribed all the names of mankind and carrying a bunch of grapes, a symbol of the graces she accords to all inhabitants of that village, fertile, thanks to Mary, in religious vocations. If the theatre did no more than to draw attention to the Marian idea linked with each of these shrines, its existence would be fully justified.

Let me mention further productions where the Marian idea predominates. First of all, there was the play entitled Credo, which brought to a close the Sixth Congress of Malines under the chairmanship of His Eminence Cardinal van Roey. No less than 125,000 spectators were present at that profession of faith, far more as co-actors with the 2,000 actors on the stage, than as passive spectators. Never shall I be able to forget Mary's entrance, when she comes to take her place of honor in the Church, surrounded by five hundred angels. Once again, the crowd understood that the reign of Christ includes also the reign of Mary in the heart and in the home.

At Bruges, in 1938, The Play of the Holy Blood was produced. The stage, set against the background of the old belfry, included the tower, ninety metres high, on which, in a fairy scene of lights, angels stood in all the embrasures and under all the portals, to salute Mary, whose role was closely woven into the entire action of the play. The actors numbered three thousand. To date, the spectators have totalled four hundred thousand...

Across the centuries of Bruges' history, Mary watches over the city, over the blood of Christ preserved there, so that when the city is saved by the Holy Blood, Mary is there, really present. So the play ends in an apotheosis representing Mary, venerated, crowned, and arrayed in a gorgeous mantle of Bruges lace. The many letters from actors and spectators have expressed their great satisfaction with the fact that, through The Play of the Holy Blood, the city has once more become con-

scious that, from a very early date, it has been a Marian city. A story will illustrate better than words the influence which such dramatic presentations can wield. An English lady, a Protestant, had attended one of the rehearsals because, her sailing reservations having already been made, she could not stay for the performance itself. "Never did I understand so well the role of Mary," she said. "It's quite different from what we were told about her!" What if that were the beginning of her conversion...

Besides all these, two other Marian devotions have been able to enlist the services of the theatre: the Little Office and the Rosary. In 1938, the Redemptorist, Father Stallaert, wrote a play that offered a means of restoring to the laity the Little Office of Mary, thus reviving an ancient custom. Catholic Action and the Marian Congregations naturally formed the nucleus of this movement. Father Stallaert's work bore fruit, as we can see from the fact that more than one hundred thousand copies of the Little Office have been distributed in Flanders and in The Netherlands during the last ten years. His proposal was to make from the Marian office a play for the people in which the liturgical choir becomes part of the dramatic action. During preparation of the text, it soon became evident that the entire Office, despite the fact that it contains the Psalms and the Common of the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin, presented no obstacle to its realization; on the contrary, a drama of the purest style was achieved, and all without changing a word! The Office was truly "performed." It proved that all the theories expounded above are not only viable, but also high in dramatic interest.

Next, the Rosary. At Lourdes, Fatima, Bannoux, and Beauraing, has not the Virgin repeatedly recommended praying the Rosary? Fatima especially teaches us to meditate each decade. Thus Bannoux has given rise to a play on the Rosary. In it, the fifteen mysteries are to be acted, so that the scenes themselves will induce the spectator to meditate. At each new tableau, the decade of Hail Mary's will be prayed aloud by actors and audience--not as an addition, but as a spontaneous prayer arising from the play itself. Here play and prayer find themselves closely united.

Will our century turn out to be that of popular plays attended by thousands of spectators? I can go beyond the frontiers of my own country to cite you the recent Marian Congress of Ronnes, France, where Henri Brochet produced before forty thousand spectators, Our Lady of the Twelve Stars, which he himself wrote. It is but one example among thousands, and it would be impossible to mention all the theatrical productions of this kind throughout the world. In his religious plays, Henri Ghon gave us a magnificent representation, moving in its tenderness, of the home life of the Blessed Virgin. I am thinking of his beautiful mystery, Christmas in the Market Place, as well as other plays by him, by Henri Brochet, and by many others.

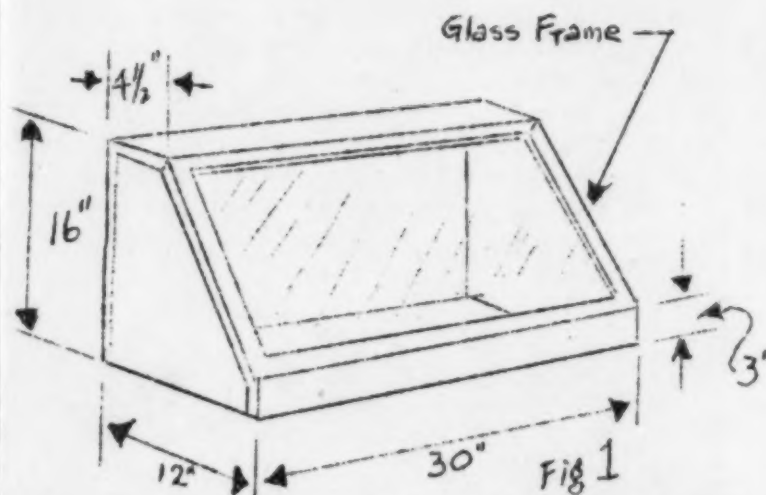
IV. CONCLUSION

From all this, we can reach one conclusion: once again the people are coming together, and once again a spirit of community and solidarity is making itself felt. Look at Rome. Thousands of people, tens and hundreds of thousands, are brought

together here and, as on the first Pentecost, feel reinvigorated, fortified, encouraged, for common prayer.

The Blessed Virgin calls the crowds to her sanctuary, and on all sides the Hail Mary's mount to heaven. It is thus, too, that the multitudes foregather to witness popular plays celebrating the glories of Mary

May dramatists be able to increase the richness, the beauty, the sublimity of Mary's mission, and, through the help of actors who do not remain insensible to the significance of the play, give the crowds that intense emotion evoked by art united with grace--art and grace which, finding each other once again, unite in God.



Please paste this over Fig. 1 on the insert sheet sent you with October's Calendar, or change height of box dimension at left from 6" to 16".

NOTE

The Editor and the translator wish to express their gratitude to the administration of Loyola University, Chicago: its kindness and generosity have made possible publication of the foregoing article for distribution by Catholic Theatre as a special feature of the Marian Year observance.

HAVE YOU READ

The late Nicholas Murray Butler is credited with saying: "The educated man is one who knows, and if he does not know, he knows where to find what he does not know." Various are the sources of the following suggestions.

"What is to restore Shakespeare's plays to the breath of fresh, vital action which alone can give them their original pungent force?" This question Dr. Margery Bailey, Stanford University, answers satisfactorily in her article, "Shakespeare in Action," *"The English Journal,"* Jan., 1954.

Our pupils play many parts in many plays. Is it expecting too much to hope that in addition to the many practical benefits gained their awareness of words is intensified? "Words, the common denominator of all mediums of communication," are clearly expounded in "Will Semantics Help?", *English Journal*, Jan., 1954.

In a review of "The Art of Dramatic Criticism," S. R. Littlewood, London, in the Feb., 1954 issue of *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Dr. Herbert Hafner writes: "There is considerably more material on the function of the critic and on the nature of dramatic criticism in Walter Kerr's article 'The Dictorial New York Critics' in *The Theatre Annual*, 1952."

Although the title, "Not Easy to Write a Play," by Brooks Atkinson, in *The New York Times*, March 6, 1954 may sound ominous, it is not: on the other hand, it is stimulating and encouraging. The dean of critics tells the requisites and pitfalls of playwriting. The contents are worthy of thorough study and assimilation.

In the review with the arresting title "With Crooked Lines: 'Green's Living Room'," *America*, March 6, Joan Madden writes convincingly of Graham Green's first play, "The Living Room." The same issue contains the reactions of Theophilus Lewis to Eliot's "The Confidential Clerk," which contains "the profundities of life" in an indiscernible way. From Mr. Lewis one can always expect an honest, intelligent criticism. Father H. J. Gardiner also adds his opinion of Eliot's latest play.

Again we read about "The Confidential Clerk" in *Saturday Review*, Feb., 27. Another kind, learned, experienced critic, Mr. John Mason Brown, has little or no praise for "The Confidential Clerk."

If still wondering just what is Catholic Fiction, read Richard Sullivan's satisfying article, "Catholic Fiction" in *Books on Trial*, March, 1954. Mr. Sullivan is professor of English at Notre Dame. The same correct fundamental ideas characteristic of Catholic Fiction belong to true Catholic Drama. Incidentally, Mr. Sullivan expresses his gratitude to his inspiring teacher, the late Father Leo L. Ward, C.S.C. and adds that some of the writings of Father Ward will soon be published. Secure this publication, which will clarify forever for you the recognition of true Catholic Literature.

Before deciding on your major production of next year, meditate on the article "Theatre in Decline," *America*, Jan. 2, 1954. Writes Mr. Ryan: "Colleges and university groups have been as remiss as the little theatres in fulfilling their obligations to the literate and discriminating audiences in their communities." Of course, we do not agree with Mr. Ryan's opinion of Players Incorporated.

Many will enjoy "Little Theatre, Come Blow Your Horn," by Maurice Valency, *Theatre Arts*, Oct., 1954.

Those of us who appreciated and admired the high-type recommendations and criticisms of Mr. Albert McCleery when he worked with us, rejoice sincerely in the paratrooping success of the ex-Paratrooper. As director of Hall of Fame TV program Mr. McCleery maintains his high standards of theatre. *Time*, Dec. 7, 1953.

All intelligent readers of the biographies of some of our saints, Paul, Magdalene, Augustine, for example, agree that their lives were not always "sweetness and light." Our young readers should be trained to read with discernment, with God's point of view. Maritain tells us that it is the altitude from which we read that determines our reactions. (Do we all know "Art and Scholasticism" by Maritain?)

Many valuable ideas, techniques pertaining to the entire field of acting and staging are contained in the following books:

With A Quiet Heart	Eva Le Gallienne
Curtain Going Up	Katherine Cornell
The Olivers	Felix Barker
Good Night, Sweet Prince (J. Barrymore)	Gene Fowler
The Julia Marlowe Story	E. H. Sothorn
Prince of Players (Edwin Booth) ..	Eleanor Ruggles

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JESUIT COLLEGE THEATRE ASSOCIATION

The colleges of the Jesuit provinces of New York, New England and Maryland have formed a JESUIT COLLEGE THEATRE ASSOCIATION for the purpose of having two annual one-act play festivals: one, within each Province; the other, between the finalists from each Province festival.

The Festival idea is an old one with the Eastern Jesuit Colleges, but in the last two years there has been a definite organization of an association, the establishment of rules and regulations governing the Festivals, and the use of a common scoring sheet for determining awards and criticism at all festivals.

A few weeks before the finals, the New York Province held its preliminary festival at Canisius College. The four New York Province colleges — Canisius College of Buffalo, Le Moyne College of Syracuse, Fordham University of New York City, and St. Peter's College of Jersey City — competed, with Fordham nosing out St. Peter's by a few points. In New England the competition was between Fairfield University of Connecticut, Holy Cross College of Massachusetts, and Boston College, with Boston College the winner. In the Maryland Province St. Joseph's College of Philadelphia was the winner in the competition between Scranton University, Loyola College of Baltimore, and Georgetown University.

On March 6th, 1954, with Fordham University as the host college, the following plays were presented in the finals of the annual competition between the three Jesuit Provinces: St. Joseph's College of Philadelphia (Maryland Province winner), **Hope is the Thing with Feathers** by Richard Harrity; Fordham University of New York City (New York Province winner), **The Girl** by Edward Peple; Boston College (New England Province winner), **Thor, with Angels** by Christopher Fry; St. Peter's College of Jersey City (not a contestant in the finals, but runner-up to Fordham in the New York Province festival, and invited as a guest play because of its novelty and charm), **The Six Gods**, a comedy based on a Japanese No-Dance, by Ethel Van Der Veer and Franklyn Bigelow. Fordham won the finals.

From the American Educational Theatre Association comes word that Emmet Lavery was the luncheon speaker at their Southern California Regional Conference on March 26. Mr. Lavery, one of the most widely translated of American playwrights, has always had a special interest in the educational theatre. The meeting was held at Riverside, California.

ROYALTY REDUCTIONS

Plans for next year will be taken up by the Board of Directors at the June meeting. The plays offering royalty reduction are an important item on the agenda. What plays are you interested in? What plans do you have for next year? Which plays would you like to see listed for possible reduction of royalties?

It is well to remember that the royalty fee is the playwright's bread and butter. To deprive him of that eventually deprives us of the material we want and need so badly. For this reason, many requests are and must be refused. However, if a sufficient number of members are interested in a certain play — if we can show that our joint interest in that play can work to the author's advantage as well as to ours, then we are justified in asking such reductions.

We must, then, know which plays can serve the interests of all. Will you write and let us know? If each member would send a list of 5 to 10 plays that are possibilities for next year, we would really have the pulse of the membership in this regard.

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